

# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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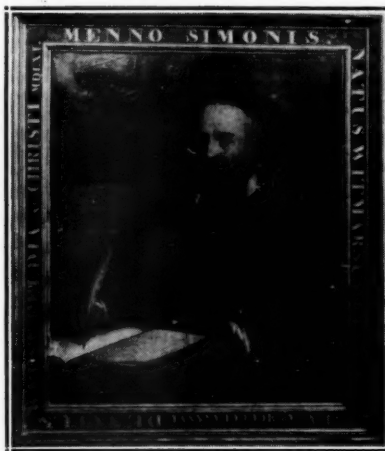
No. 1

## Introducing the New Bulletin

Mennonite General Conference appointed its first Historical Committee in 1911. Of the ten brethren who were then appointed three are still serving with the committee: S. F. Coffman, John Horsch, and J. B. Smith. The Historical Committee has taken the lead in promoting interest in the history of the Church. John Horsch, for example, has written numerous books, covering many aspects of Mennonite history and doctrine. Perhaps his chief publication to date is his biography of Menno Simons, 1916. Five years later J. S. Hartzler told the story of Mennonite experiences during the first World War. In 1926 the history of the American Mennonite Mission in India was published. H. S. Bender prepared an exhaustive bibliography of American Mennonite publications in 1929. Two years later (1931) regional Mennonite histories began to appear.

The Historical Committee herewith presents a new periodical to all those interested in the history of the Mennonite Church. It will be the aim of this BULLETIN to keep its readers informed of current progress in Mennonite historical study; to provide a channel for brief articles dealing with the history of our denomination; to review briefly the current publications in this field; to provide an opportunity for the publication of questions and answers dealing with congregational, church, or family history; to make note of articles dealing with Mennonite history in current periodicals; and to serve as a channel of communication between historical workers. Readers are invited to correspond freely with the editors, submitting questions or replying to published queries, reporting items for the "News & Notes" column, or suggesting books which ought to be noted in the "Recent Publications" section. The MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN will in no way infringe upon the fields now being cared for by other Mennonite church periodicals and it solicits the active support of all those interested in the history of the Mennonite Church.

This first issue of the BULLETIN is being mailed to a large number of ministers and other prospective supporters. Those who are interested in receiving it regularly should become members of the "Mennonite Historical Association" (de-



Menno Simons, 1496-1561

## Our History

More than four centuries ago Conrad Grebel and fifteen others stepped out in full loyalty to the teachings of Christ and established a free church of voluntary believers. The members of the new church received baptism after conversion and lived in strict obedience to the New Testament ethic, including the non-resistant manner of life. Persecution set in at once and took a serious toll of life. The history of the Mennonite Church is written in blood and tears.

One of the few early leaders who escaped the executioner was Menno Simons. Menno will always be remembered for his unflinching stand for the truth of God's word and for his humble devotion to the cause of Christ's kingdom.

Our Church has many heroes of the faith, and many of them gave their lives that the precious heritage might be preserved. The only way to become acquainted with the story of the past is to read history. It is to stimulate interest in the history of the Mennonite Church that this BULLETIN has been founded.

scribed on page two of this issue) and will thereby receive the BULLETIN free of charge. We appeal to every reader to help find new members for the Association. Please show this BULLETIN to interested friends and tell them of this new historical organ.

—Editor.

## Our Mennonite Archives

Harold S. Bender

An archives is a place where official and private records are kept for safe preservation and use. Most churches and similar organizations maintain official archives depositories either at their national headquarters, at the headquarters of the various boards, or in connection with church historical societies. In such depositories are kept records of official meetings, minute books, official correspondence of church officers and organizations, as well as all other documents and records of historical value, whether official or private. The documentary materials which constitute these archives are carefully preserved and protected and are filed and indexed for reference purposes.

Up to the present time the Mennonite church has had no archives depository. Because of this many important historical documents have been lost. Seeing this need, the General Conference of 1937 took action establishing a general church archives and authorizing the Historical Committee to proceed with the work.

In view of the prohibitive cost of erecting and caring for a special archives building, it has been decided to accept the offer of the Mennonite Board of Education and Goshen College to locate the archives in the basement floor of the new fireproof library now being erected on the Goshen College campus. The Historical Committee has entered into an agreement with the Mennonite Board of Education and Goshen College whereby space will be provided for the archives in return for a contribution to the cost of the building. Since maintenance of the building will also be provided by the college, this plan will be a very economical one. In return for this generous provision by the school the committee is endeavoring to raise ten per cent of the cost of the building, which will be \$5,000 out of a total of \$50,000. An appeal is being made to each congregation to lift an offering for this cause. To date approximately \$3,000 has been received. The archives will be equipped and opened for services during the summer of 1940. A special dedicatory program will be given at Goshen College, June 8, 1940.

## QUESTION BOX

### Who Are the Amish?

The Amish take their name from Jacob Ammann, an Alsatian or Swiss Mennonite bishop who led a schism from the Mennonite Church in Switzerland and Alsace in the years, 1693-97. Ammann urged several points, two of his emphases being: 1. That Christians ought to follow strictly Paul's injunction "not to eat" with people who have been excommunicated from the church. 2. That "true-hearted" people outside the Mennonite Church are not saved. Both points call for a word of explanation.

The first and main point on which Ammann insisted is called "Avoidance" or "Shunning." The meaning of these terms is that Christians should "avoid" all social contacts whatever with those who have fallen into sin and have been excommunicated from the church. The anti-Ammann group, led by Bishop Hans Reist, took a milder view of Paul's instructions. The second point refers to "true-hearted" people. This group is technically known as "Halb-Taeufer" or Semi-Anabaptists, meaning those folks who remained members of the state church but who sympathized with the Anabaptists (Mennonites) and gave them aid, feeding and sheltering them in times of persecution. (See the article by John Horsch in the *Gospel Herald*, XXXIII, pp. 138-9, May 9, 1940.) Ammann strictly forbade his followers to attend state church services, and opposed allowing for the salvation of Semi-Anabaptists. There were other minor issues in the division of course. On the whole the Ammann group were more strict in discipline than the main body of the church.

In Europe the old division has been almost forgotten; there the Mennonite Church is no longer divided into Amish and Mennonite groups. And in America about one-half of the Amish united with the Mennonites between 1915 and 1927. However the stricter Amish groups, the so-called "Old Order Amish," the Conservative Amish Conference and the Ontario Amish Conference, with a total membership of over 15,000, who did not follow their more progressive brethren into the Mennonite Church, still maintain an independent existence in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and other states. The "Old Order" Amish alone have a total membership of over ten thousand, excluding unbaptized children. They cling to the German language, generally worship in private homes, and adhere to the older customs and forms.

—W.

## Mennonite Historical Association

At the 1939 session of Mennonite General Conference the Historical Committee presented the following recommendation to the conference: "In view of the growing interest in Mennonite history, and the establishment of local Mennonite historical associations, such as the Franconia Mennonite Historical Society and the Mennonite historical societies at our church schools, we feel that the cause of Mennonite church history might be further advanced by providing for a general Mennonite Historical Association for the whole church. . . ."

The above recommendation was adopted by General Conference. Accordingly, the Historical Committee met at Scottdale, Pa., on December 27, 1939, and decided on the following regulations to govern the new Association:

1. A membership fee of one dollar annually shall be charged.
2. The Association shall publish a semiannual bulletin.
3. J. C. Wenger shall serve as editor of the bulletin, with the other members of the committee serving as associate editors.
4. The Association shall have two types of members: a) regular membership, open to members of the Mennonite Church; b) associate membership, open to all others interested in the purposes of the Association. All members will receive the bulletin free of charge.
5. Members shall be elected by the board of directors upon nomination by any member of the association, or upon direct application to the secretary or to any member of the board of directors.
6. The name of the organization shall be, "Mennonite Historical Association."
7. The control of the organization shall be in the hands of the Historical Committee of Mennonite General Conference. This committee shall constitute the Board of Directors for the organization and shall determine the policies, control the finances, and arrange for the programs of the Association.
8. The purpose of the Association is to provide a channel for the expression of the historical interest which has developed in our church, to give opportunity for financial support of this work, and to provide for a gathering of those interested in Mennonite history in connection with the biennial meeting of General Conference or at a convenient time.

All applications for membership in the Association, accompanied by the membership fee (\$1.00) should be sent to the secretary, H. S. Bender, Goshen, Ind., or to any member of the Historical Committee.

—J. C. W.

## Sunday School Centennial

The year 1940 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first known American Mennonite Sunday school. To J. Boyd Cressman of Kitchener, Ont., belongs the credit for discovering proof of the existence of a Mennonite Sunday school in Ontario in 1840. A German periodical, the *Deutsche Canadier*, published at Berlin (now Kitchener, Ontario), contained an editorial in October, 1841, which reads as follows: "The Sunday School, started last year (1840), and begun anew this year, which has been held interchangeably in Wanner's and Bechtel's meetinghouses in the eastern part of Waterloo, is enjoying good progress. The number of children is increasing and mounted to 75 last Sunday." (Bechtel's meetinghouse is now called Hagey's.) Cressman's article is found in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XIII, pp. 159-186; (July 1939), note p. 183 especially.

The *Deutsche Canadier* for April 23, 1841, announces that a Sunday school is to be opened in the schoolhouse at Ben Eby's. The announcement is signed by Elias Eby, J. C. Schneider and Christian Enslin. "Ben Eby's" congregation, later Berlin, and now called Kitchener First Mennonite Church, therefore had its first Sunday school in 1841.

The third Sunday school to be noted is that of Bishop Nicholas Johnson (1787-1873). Bishop Johnson lived in Fayette County, Pa., and served as a leader in the Masontown congregation which was then under the Lancaster Mennonite Conference. The late J. B. Moyer of Elkhart, Ind., stated (*Christian Monitor*, XXVII, p. 240) that his mother had participated in a Sunday Bible class taught by Nicholas Johnson in 1840. And J. N. Durr (1853-1934) also claimed (*Gospel Herald*, XIX, p. 1034) that Johnson had started a Sunday Bible class in a building on his farm in 1840. But John F. Funk (1835-1930), editor of the *Herald of Truth*, who held evangelistic meetings at Masontown in 1872, reported (*Herald of Truth*, X, p. 158) of Bishop Johnson: "In this church in the year 1842 he took an active and leading part among the members of the church in organizing and conducting a Sabbath School. This, it is believed, was the first SABBATH SCHOOL established in the Mennonite Church within the United States." This statement, seems to be entirely reliable. However, all of these early Sunday schools died in a short time. The first permanent Mennonite Sunday School was started in 1863 at West Liberty, Ohio, by David Plank.

—J. C. W.

## NEWS & NOTES

The April and May, 1940, numbers of the *Christian Monitor* contain articles by John Horsch on "The Doctrines of Sin, Salvation, and Sanctification As Held by the Early Mennonites."

John L. Horst writes on the "Rise of the Young People's Bible Meeting," in the February 8, 1940 issue of the *Gospel Herald*.

The *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (Mennonite Lexicon), a comprehensive encyclopedia published by the Mennonites of Germany in instalments since 1913, has now reached the letter M.

John D. Souder of Telford, Pa., is reviving the old art of illuminated writing or *Fraktur-Schriften*.

The October, 1939, number of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* has an article by John Umble of Goshen, Indiana, giving the text of Amish ordination charges.

John Horsch has now completed Part I of the forthcoming *Mennonite History*; Part I deals with the history of Mennonites in Europe.

The Memorial Library of Goshen College, in which our Church Archives is to be housed, is rapidly nearing completion, and will be dedicated on June 8, 1940.

The *Christian Monitor*, March 1940, contains a valuable article by John Horsch on the co-workers of Menno Simons: D. Philips, L. Bouwens, and Gillis of Aachen.

The *Mennonite Quarterly Review* for January, 1940, contains five articles by members of the Historical Committee: H. S. Bender, Ira D. Landis, H. A. Brunk, John Horsch, and J. C. Wenger. Particular attention is called to the first instalment of the Palatinate Mennonite Census Lists, 1664-1738. Later issues of the *Review* will continue these census lists to the year 1774.

John Umble has practically completed his manuscript on the history of Ohio Mennonite Sunday schools. It is to be published this summer.

The four hundredth anniversary of the conversion of Menno Simons (1936) occasioned the production of three biographies of Menno: one in German by Cornelius Krahn, now of Tabor College (Kansas); one by H. S. Bender and John Horsch; and one by C. Henry Smith.

H. H. Hartzler of R. 1, Goshen, Ind., is working on the genealogy of the King family; while Silas Hertzler, also of Goshen, is performing the same service for the Hertzler family. The Hertzler history is almost ready for publication.

The Mennonites of Berne, Ind., recently (1938) issued a centennial history of their settlement and church, by Eva F. Sprunger.

Isaac W. Martin of East Petersburg, Pa., is at work on the genealogy of the Martin family; more particularly, the descendants of George Martin (1742-1829), son of the immigrant David Martin (1691-1784). David Martin was married to Barbara Herr, granddaughter of Bishop Hans Herr of the Pequea settlement.

The January-March (1940) number of *The Journal of American Folk-Lore* contains an article by John Umble on "Amish Hymns and Hymn Tunes."

The Mennonites of Germany have recently begun publishing a new journal of Mennonite history, *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*. Four numbers have thus far appeared, 1936-1939. Christian Hege of Frankfurt am Main is the editor.

The January, 1940, issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, pp. 59-63, lists fifteen Dutch, German, and English Mennonite Yearbooks.

The Historical Societies of our church schools are invited to send news of their work to the BULLETIN.

The editors will welcome suggestions for articles and notes for future issues of Mennonite Historical Bulletin.

## INQUIRIES

Can readers help the editor find local historians or genealogists who are familiar with the following families: Senenig, Buckwalter, Kendig, High, Rutt, and Sherk? All these families have branches in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Does anyone know where the "Two Interesting Letters," printed on pages 401-405 of *Mennonite Church History* by Hartzler and Kauffman, are now preserved?

How is it to be explained that the Franconia Mennonites observe the communion service annually, while the Mennonites of other conferences have semi-annual services?

## Ontario Mennonite Archives

L. J. Burkholder

On the 16th floor of the Whitney Block in Queens Park, Toronto, is housed the "Mennonite Box." This constitutes the "Ontario Mennonite Archives." In 1928 the Mennonite Conference of Ontario appointed the writer of this article Conference Historian with instructions to tabulate all ordinations and gather such other material as might be of interest to the church. In carrying out the wishes of the conference I soon acquired rare material of historical value. For the purpose of safe-keeping an arrangement was made with the Archives Branch of the Provincial Government of Ontario whereby they would give space for The Mennonite Box free of charge in perpetuity. We have the right of access to the Box at all office hours. The Box is metal and measures about 12 x 12 x 30 inches. It now contains 84 items classified into four groups, viz., Group (R) Records, Group (G) Grove, Group (M) Moyer, and Group (L) Letters.

The oldest Conference record is an *Abschrift* of the Annual Conference held at Markham, May 28, 1842. Then there is a List (in English) of bishops, ministers, and deacons resident in Canada in 1853. The Ontario Conference issues the oldest uninterrupted Mennonite publication in the world—*The Calendar of Appointments*. It first appeared for the year 1836 and the current issue is designated as the 105th issue. The Box contains a copy of the second issue, 1837, and a full set of issues from 1870 to date.

The Box also contains a Conference Minute Book covering the years 1847-1901, and Minute Book No. 2, from the year 1901 forward. There is also an original map of Woolwich Township, with the names of the landowners shown.

Group (M) has considerable material on the Hoch division and steps leading up to that event, in the '40's and '50's, also references to Ministers Jacob Krehbiel and John Lapp of Clarence Centre, New York, and their affiliations. Of particular interest is a letter written by Bishop Moyer in 1831 to fellow ministers Herschi and Zewitz at Black Creek.

Group (L) contains miscellaneous correspondence including several letters written by the late J. S. Coffman to E. S. Hallman in 1893. Hallman was one of the young men who came into the Mennonite Church at that time through Coffman's influence.

A complete catalog of articles to be found in the Box is given in Appendix I in *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario*, page 322.



## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*The Mennonites in Iowa*, By MELVIN GINGERICH, The State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1939. Pages 419. \$3.00.

Until 1931 no adequate regional history of the Mennonites in any part of the United States was available. Since that time four such volumes have appeared: Illinois, 1931; Lancaster, 1931; Ontario, 1935; and Franconia, 1937. Melvin Gingerich's *The Mennonites in Iowa* published in 1939, is a worthy addition to this series, and ranks as one of the best written, as well as best printed and bound volumes in the field of American Mennonite history.

The volume is valuable not only for the detailed and authoritative account of the various Amish and Mennonite settlements of Iowa beginning with the first settlement in Lee County in 1839, but also for its clear and well-balanced description of the faith, practices, and way of life maintained by the various groups in Iowa during the past century, particularly by the Old Order Amish. Melvin Gingerich has an eye for the deeper things, as well as for the more superficial aspects of settlement and material growth. The value of the book is enhanced by its thorough scholarship and ample documentation.

—H. S. Bender.

*Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary*. By DANIEL KAUFFMAN, Editor. Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa., 1937. Pp. 443. \$2.00.

*The Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary*, by Daniel Kauffman, is a work of special character, dealing with materials that are peculiarly Mennonite. A generation may pass away and leave but little trace of its history and rich experience. Because the Mennonite people have not been publicly minded for a number of generations past, and are not now so minded to any great extent, much that is of value in history and experience has been missed by the present generation and is in danger of being lost to the future. Every church has its particular literature and terminology. Our religious language means to us what others would not always interpret as we do. Our religious dictionary has its definitions recorded in this new work. Our religious history of persons, places, and incidents has been assembled and placed at the disposal of the public as well as to the Church in the language of those who knew it and understood it best. The *Cyclopedic Dictionary* of the Mennonites interprets their leaders, life, and history in brief, printed articles, and

is for this reason a valuable and convenient reference book.

—S. F. Coffman.

*Who's Who Among the Mennonites*, A. WARKENTIN, Editor. Published by the Editor, North Newton, Kansas, 1937. Pp. 221. \$2.00.

Abram Warkentin of Bethel College (Kansas) has done a service to all those interested in information about the present leaders of the various branches of the Mennonites in America. In this volume, about 150 pages in Part I are devoted to biographical data on a large number of living ministers, physicians, educators, and business men of the Mennonite Church. No doubt everyone using the book will look in vain for a few leaders in whom he is interested, but in some cases omissions are due to non-co-operation on the part of the persons themselves, and it is of course impossible to make a work of this type wholly "exhaustive"; also there is no fixed standard by which to decide upon those whose biographies should be included. Part II is a classified directory of Mennonite mission fields, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, schools, periodicals, etc. A minor defect of the book is its large number of typographical errors: in some cases one can surmise what the reading ought to be while in others this is impossible. The book is nevertheless a very useful addition to the library of those interested in the Mennonites of America. We await with interest the same author's promised volume devoted to deceased Mennonite leaders.

—J. C. W.

*Martyrs Mirror*. By T. J. VAN BRAGHT, Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa., 1938. Pp. 1152. \$6.00.

This book may be considered the greatest literary production in the history of the Mennonite Church. It was first published in Holland in 1660 by T. J. Van Braght. It cites the experiences and sufferings of multitudes of the defenseless Christians from the time of Christ down to A. D. 1660. Gruesome pictures of cruel deaths from the first to the seventeenth century are here preserved and portrayed. The second edition (1685) has 104 copper engravings by the artist John Luyken. Fifty-five of these engravings are found in the present English edition of 1938. The value of the *Martyrs' Mirror* is that it establishes the faith of the saints so they may be able to stand firm when war and persecutions must be met. The pioneer settlers in America felt the need of this book when the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars were brewing and for that reason they had the Dutch edition translated into German at Ephrata, Pa., in 1748.

The book also includes a statement of "The Apostles Creed," the most ancient and simple statement of faith. Upon confession of this creed many lost their lives. The later tenets of faith and creeds of the Mennonite Church are also listed in this volume. This new English edition (1938) is a reprint of the edition which was newly translated from the Dutch language at Elkhart, Ind., in 1886. It is a valuable addition to any library.

—J. C. Clemens.

*The Missionary Movement Among Lancaster Conference Mennonites*. By IRA D. LANDIS. Printed by Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa., 1937. Pp. 119. \$0.25.

This is an interesting account of mission work among the congregations of the largest settlement of Mennonites in this country. Following the introduction the author discusses the basis for the missionary organization of the church. Then follow chapters dealing with town missions, early city missions, and later city missions. He turns next to a discussion of the rural mission stations, charitable institutions, and other phases of the work, closing with a challenge to do a still larger work. He shows how "the thirty-five meetinghouses of 1840 and 1890 are today increased to sixty-nine houses of worship including three schoolhouses and two dwellings adapted to mission purposes." The work of the Lancaster Conference District extends to Brentwood, Md., near Washington, D. C. and to Tampa, Florida. Recently even Africa enters into the picture.

The work is based on the available historical sources, such as the records of the various stations. The author has gone to the trouble to account for the origin as well as the development of the work. The value of the book is enhanced by the insertion of a number of pictures, charts, and graphs. The part which the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities has had in this work is given due consideration.

—H. A. Brunk.

### APPLICATION BLANK

Historical Committee,  
H. S. Bender, Secretary,  
Goshen, Indiana.

Brethren: I wish to be enrolled as a member of the Mennonite Historical Association. Find enclosed one dollar to pay my dues for one year. You may send the MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN to the address indicated below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or R. R. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Postoffice \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_

